

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 156 268

JC 780 363

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 TITLE Student Subcultures in the Community College.
 INSTITUTION DeKalb Community Coll., Clarkston, Ga.
 PUB DATE 23 May 78
 NOTE 16p.; Funded by the Metro-Atlanta/Georgia State University Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa and the Phi Delta Kappa District VII Projects Committee

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Academic Aspiration; Age; *College Freshmen; College Majors; College Role; Community Colleges; Commuting Students; Day Students; Females; *Identification (Psychological); *Junior Colleges; Males; Student Attitudes; *Student Characteristics; Student Participation; *Student Subcultures; Surveys
 IDENTIFIERS *Clark Trow Ratings; Student Objectives

ABSTRACT

In addition to providing demographic information and data on sex, age and college majors, 500 freshmen who attended DeKalb Community College orientation classes during fall 1977 were asked to rank various student subcultures according to preference. The subculture list followed the Clark-Trow model that defines four subgroups among college students: vocational--those who want to learn and graduate to find gainful employment; academic--those who want to explore new ideas and use their intellectual talents for truth and knowledge; collegiate--those interested in college extra-curricular and social programs; and nonconformist--those who remain independent of the system and want to explore innovative ideas with some activism elements in mind. Results indicated that of the day students surveyed, 58% were female; 27.2% were 17 and 62.8% 18 years old; 51 were business, 34 nursing, 31 liberal arts, and 22 engineering majors; 59 were undecided; and 13 or fewer chose one of 61 other majors. As for subculture choice, 47.2% preferred the collegiate, 35% the vocational, 14.4% the academic, and 3.4% the nonconformist categories. Results of this survey of commuter college students compared favorably with results from residential colleges. Study implications are discussed as they relate to student commitment to their college, and a bibliography is included. (TR)

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STUDENT SUBCULTURES IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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May 23, 1978

Funding for the project was supported with resources
from Phi Delta Kappa, District VII; the Metro Atlanta-
Georgia State University of Phi Delta Kappa; and
DeKalb Community College.

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Student Subcultures in the Community College

During the college years, there are many forces which impinge upon the college student. Some of these forces include the relationships with faculty, administrators, peer groups, family, and the political and social climate of the society. When college researchers are asked to identify the most influential aspects of the college environment, there is likely to be one common area which is mentioned. Peer groups or student subcultural influences have been cited by many researchers as the principal determinant of student attitudes, values, and ideas during the college years (Apostal, 1968; Astin, 1968; Becker, Geer, Hughes and Strauss, 1961; Freedman, 1956; Monroe, 1972; Newcomb, 1962).

The nature of the problem in commuter community colleges is that the students lack identification with the institutions which could be partially attributed to an open admissions policy or the commuting aspect. However, the lack of student interest in the institution is revealed by the low rate of participation in student activities such as student government, clubs, and attendance at athletic events. In many instances, the commuter student also lacks opportunities for contact with college faculty and other students because the faculty also tend to be dispersed over a larger area and also tend to spend as little time as necessary on campus. Schuchman (1974) concluded that commuter students need opportunities to relate to

faculty and others in the academic setting. Disadvantages were caused by the diversity of the student population and by the distances involved - between students and the campus and among students.

Although student subcultures, using the Clark-Trow model (1966), have been studied in residential colleges and universities, there have been fewer studies conducted in commuter community colleges. Basically, the Clark-Trow model of student subcultures describes four different and distinct subcultures among college students. The vocational subculture is described as those students who primarily want to learn and graduate in order to find gainful employment. The academic subculture includes those students who primarily attend college to explore new ideas and to use their intellectual talents for truth and knowledge. The collegiate subculture is composed of students who primarily are interested in the extra-curricular and social programs of the college and are interested in the fun spirit in college. The nonconformist subculture includes students who primarily are in college to be independent of the system and to explore innovative ideas with some elements of activism in mind.

Questions about the four subcultures have been asked by many researchers. Kees and McDougall (1971) validated the Clark-Trow model as a meaningful instrument for studying student subcultures and concluded that the college student subcultures

described by Clark and Trow (1966) are discernible at the time when students matriculate in college.

Doucet (1977), in a study, did not find distinct subcultures and concluded that the totality of undergraduate university student orientations was best described as if the orientations were viewed as blends of the two main choices of subcultures.

Biggs (1973) found that students at the University of Minnesota selected distinctly different subcultures. The vocational subculture was selected by 36% of the students while the academic subculture was selected by 30% of the students, and the nonconformist subculture was selected by 28% of the students while the collegiate subculture was selected by 6% of the students.

Brainard and Dollar (1971) concluded that student leaders differ according to their campus reference groups and are predicated upon the characteristics that tend to describe the subcultured groups..

The purpose of the present study was to determine the various student subcultures (Clark-Trow model) selected by freshmen in a commuter community college (DeKalb Community College). An additional purpose of the study was to gather data about the sex, age, and college majors of the freshmen to provide a profile of students to supplement the subcultural data.

Method

The College Student Questionnaires, Part 1, developed by Educational Testing Service, were administered to 500 freshmen who attended orientation classes at DeKalb Community College during Fall Quarter, 1977. Part 1 of the College Student Questionnaire was developed to gather demographic information for entering students (freshmen or transfer) prior to the beginning of the college year. Each freshman was asked to rank the various student subcultures according to preference as listed in the College Student Questionnaire. A separate questionnaire was developed to gather responses about college majors, ages and sexes.

Results

Table 1 shows that 47.20 percent of the freshmen preferred the collegiate subculture and that 35.00 percent of the freshmen preferred the vocational subculture. The academic subculture was selected by 14.40 percent of the freshmen while the nonconformist subculture was selected by 3.40 percent of the freshmen.

In Table 2, the ages of the freshmen are depicted, and it was evident that the majority of the freshmen were either 17 or 18 years of age because 27.20 percent were 17 years old and 62.80 percent were 18 years old.

TABLE 1

Subcultures of the Freshmen

Subculture	N	%
Vocational	175	35.00
Academic	72	14.40
Collegiate	236	47.20
Non-Conformist	17	3.40
Total	500	100.00

TABLE 2

Ages of the Freshmen

Age	N	%
16	8	1.60
17	136	27.20
18	314	62.80
19	22	4.40
20+	20	4.00
Total	500	100.00

TABLE 3
College Majors of Freshmen

Major	Number
Accounting	13
Administration of Justice	5
Advertising	3
Aeronautical Engineering	5
Agricultural Engineering	3
Airline Hostess	3
Architectural Engineering	4
Art	12
Automotive Technology	4
Banking and Finance	3
Biology	3
Business Administration	51
Business Management	4
Chemical Engineering	3
Chemistry	4
Civil Engineering	3
Computer Programming	4
Data Processing	9
Dental Hygiene	6
Drama	2
Early Childhood Education	4
Early Childhood Development	3
Economics	3
Education	4
Electrical Technology	5
Elementary Education	6
Engineering	22
Fashion Merchandising	10
Fine Arts	3
Fire Science	3
Forestry	4
History	4
Industrial Management	4
Interior Design	3
International Relations	3
Journalism	5
Lab Technology	4

(Continued)

TABLE 3 (Cont'd)

College Majors of Freshmen

Major	Number
Law Enforcement	3
Liberal Arts	31
Lithography	3
Marketing	7
Mechanical Engineering	4
Medical Office Assistant	8
Music	10
Nursing	34
Pharmacy	6
Physical Education	4
Physical Therapy	3
Pre-Dentistry	8
Pre-Law	11
Pre-Medicine	8
Psychology	11
Public Relations	3
Real Estate	4
Recreation Leadership	6
Religion	4
Secondary Education	5
Secretarial Science	6
Sociology	6
Special Education	4
Undecided	59
Urban Life	4
Veterinary Medicine	3
Visual Arts	3
X-ray Technology	3
Zoology	3
Total	500

TABLE 4

Sexes of the Freshmen

Sexes	N	%
Females	290	58.00
Males	210	42.00
Total	500	100.00

Table 3 gives the college majors of the freshmen. The following college majors predominated among the 500 freshmen: business administration, liberal arts, nursing, and engineering.

In Table 4, the sexes of the freshmen are listed. There were 58.0 percent females and 42.0 percent males in the group.

Discussion

The results of the present study compare favorably with the results of student subcultural studies in predominantly residential college environments. The significant difference in subcultures with the collegiate being the prime choice of the freshmen compares with the results found by Apostol (1970) and Kees (1974).

The results disagree with the findings of Biggs (1973) and Lange (1972).

Although the majority of the freshmen in the study were 17 or 18 year olds, there were older students who participated in the study. Since the study did not include evening students, the average ages of the students were lower than if the evening students were present during the orientation.

College majors appeared to have no effect on subcultures in the present study because many majors were represented with the collegiate subculture being selected the most.

It is evident from the paucity of research that commuter

college students have little commitment to their college as shown by the lack of time spent on campus and the participation in student activities. Although many of the students in this study selected the collegiate subculture as their dominant philosophy of college attendance, the participation rate in student activities of these students is minimal. The results of the present study disagreed with the findings of Biggs (1973) at the University of Minnesota. As Schuchman (1974) found, commuter college students spend little time on campus outside of formal class time and therefore do not develop any loyalty to the campus and to the college. It is entirely possible that time spent on campus by students devoted to student activities is a major factor in promoting a closer feeling of students to the college. Programming the activities to allow participation is an alternative for students who work, and have families. Free activity periods in the middle of the day may be one solution to increasing the amount of participation in student activities on campus. Beyond that, students have a choice and should be encouraged to learn from each other as well as from a formalized college teaching process.

College student subcultures are so diverse on the commuter college campus that it is difficult to make definite conclusions about the nature of each subculture. The nature of the commuter college campus being transitory creates transitory subcultures.

Since the students are also transitory, it is difficult for students in the same subculture to reinforce each other. Unless there is some type of permanence attached to the commuter college - dormitories or student activity programming in the middle of the day, the subcultures will remain transitory and the lack of commitment to the college will continue.

Wishnoff (1975) concluded that human potential groups should be maintained for the total development and that diversion and rap groups should function for intellectual stimulation and insight into the field the student was pursuing. Developing specialized programs for women, minorities, and other subcultures in the commuter college would also meet the needs of students who feel alienated by the college setting.

It behooves student personnel administrators to identify the various student subcultures on the commuter college campus so that programming student activities can be done initially with the students' needs in mind.

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